

Women in America

FROM COLONIAL TIMES TO THE 20TH CENTURY

Advisory Editors

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PEOPLE · LIVERMORE

THE STORY OF MY LIFE

MARY A. LIVERMORE

A Note About This Volume

Mary Ashton Rice Livermore (1820-1905) was a teacher in a female seminary outside Boston at 15; at 19 she was tutor to a plantation family in Virginia where she saw enough to make her an opponent of slavery. During the Civil War she made arrangements for the care of her husband and children and devoted herself entirely to the work of the Sanitary Commission. After the war she worked for women's suffrage, peace and temperance. She was one of the country's most popular lecturers, making some 150 appearances annually with good earnings. Ten years after *My Story of the War* (Arno Press, 1972), her first successful book, she reviewed her life in this volume which is augmented by the texts of her six most popular lectures. Included is a lecture she delivered over 800 times, "What Shall We Do With Our Daughters?" which, among other things, attacked corsets and endorsed physical exercise for young women.



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THE STORY OF MY LIFE

OR

THE SUNSHINE AND SHADOW OF SEVENTY YEARS

BY

MARY A. LIVERMORE

TEACHER, AUTHOR, WIFE, MOTHER, ARMY NURSE, SOLDIER'S FRIEND,
LECTURER, AND REFORMER

A

NARRATIVE OF HER EARLY LIFE AND STRUGGLES FOR EDUCATION, 'THREE YEARS' EXPERIENCES ON A SOUTHERN PLANTATION AMONG WHITE MASTERS AND BLACK SLAVES, HER COURTSHIP, MARRIAGE, DOMESTIC LIFE, ETC.

WITH HITHERTO UNRECORDED

Incidents and Recollections of Three Years' Experience as an Army Nurse
in the Great Civil War

AND REMINISCENCES OF

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS' EXPERIENCES ON THE LECTURE PLATFORM, INCLUDING THRILLING, PATHETIC, AND HUMOROUS INCIDENTS OF PLATFORM LIFE

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1899

CHAPTER XXII.

SOME HAPPY YEARS OF MY LIFE.—THE WASHINGTONIAN REFORM—REMINISCENCES OF THEODORE PARKER AND DANIEL WEBSTER.

The Duxbury School—My Oldest Pupil Five Months my Senior—Neither Rewards offered nor Punishments threatened—A School Orchestra—A well-remembered Excursion—Left by the Tide—The Launching of a Ship breaks up my School—Some of the Happiest Years of my Life—Joys that are Dead and Loved Ones that have Vanished—The Washingtonian Reform—Six Drunkards who met for a "Roaring Good Time"—A Mighty Influence—Pressed into Work for the Cold Water Army—The first Temperance Work of my Life—My first Meeting with Theodore Parker—My Prejudices against him—They are Swept Away by his Gentleness and Fairness—The Strange Adventures of a Cat—Daniel Webster's Summer Residence in Marshfield—Incidents and Events relating to him.

DURING the summer I received several invitations to teach in New England academies, or to take charge of private schools. I desired to continue in the profession I had adopted, but to have leisure for study at the same time, and as the invitation that came to me from the town of Duxbury, Massachusetts, was the most promising in this respect, I accepted it.

A few years before, Mr. George Partridge, a wealthy citizen of the town, had died, leaving a handsome sum of money for the establishment of an educational institution, to be called the "Partridge Academy." By the terms of the will, the money was to remain invested, until it had increased to an amount that would enable the Academy to begin its work on a large scale, which would necessitate a delay of years in its establishment. Some of the more in-

telligent people of the town, who were interested in the advance of higher education, had therefore decided that a private school must be maintained to bridge over this hiatus of years, and to prepare their children for entrance to the Academy.

There was a stir everywhere at that time in behalf of High Schools for girls, and it was hoped that the curriculum of the Academy would be so arranged as to obviate the necessity for a High School in the town. The Academy was to admit both sexes, and to fit boys for college. A committee waited upon me, with a statement of the qualifications they desired in a teacher, and a wish that I would allow myself to be considered a candidate. They put me through a most superficial and impromptu examination on the spot, and told me frankly they would make an engagement with me immediately, if I would accept it. I had been recommended for the position by the cashier of the Duxbury bank, whose wife had been one of my former teachers.

I stipulated that I should be free from interference in the conduct and management of the school, and have freedom to carry out ideas of my own, which, though in actual practice to-day, were regarded by many educators at the time as absurd; that my pupils should not exceed twenty-five in number, should not be under twelve years of age, and should include both sexes.

For a short time, at the outset, the boys preponderated in the school, and were older than the girls. My oldest pupil was a young man five months my senior. His education had been very much neglected in early life, in consequence of a defect of vision, which had only been cured in part after he was twenty years old. He was the most earnest, devoted, and persistent pupil I ever had, and, if I could have allowed it, would have monopolized every moment of my

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time out of school hours in giving him instruction. All the young people in my charge belonged to good families, had been well trained, and possessed that polish and refinement of manner that comes from travel and association with intelligent and cultivated people. Most of them were the children of shipmasters, whose wives frequently accompanied their husbands on voyages, and some of my pupils had been born on the ocean, or in foreign ports. Their homes abounded in collections of foreign curiosities, alabaster vases, bronzes, statuettes, curious glasses of exquisite form and mould, in every shade of iridescence, baskets made of bamboo, ivory carvings, painted wood-work, in short, bric-a-brac of all kinds. The town was rich in foreign importations, brought home by the masters of vessels and their crews.

I informed my pupils on the opening day that the school was to be self-governed; there were to be no punishments for offenses, no rewards for well doing. Each one must conform to the rules of the school as a matter of honor, or must leave it. Every young man was expected to be a gentleman, every one of the young girls a lady. They must master their studies, not that they might avoid losing a place in the class, or to gain a better position, but for the sake of the knowledge that would result from their efforts. I required courtesy from the young people in dealing with each other, and desired them to enter the schoolroom from the dressing-room, as they would a private parlor.

I soon discovered that they were largely endowed with musical ability, when we organized a little orchestra of violins, 'cellos, and other instruments, and thereafter every session of the school was opened with music, vocal and instrumental. They sang well and easily, — mastered new tunes, even when complicated. The musical selections for the

week were announced on Monday morning, so that there was opportunity for study and practice. My pupils delighted in the object lessons, and general exercises in arithmetic, spelling, and grammar, which were new to them, and quickened them to great alertness. We abolished the "school readers," and selected instead new publications of the day, either in prose or poetry, which were interesting to young people, and then acquainted ourselves thoroughly with the sketch, story, or poem, and with the history and character of its author.

A class in botany was formed which became very popular, when it was found that much of the work could be accomplished out of doors among the plants, either in the morning or afternoon, as was best adapted to the habits of the particular plant or flower under observation. A general astronomy class was formed, and in the evening when conditions favored it, we took lanterns, celestial maps, and text-books to the top of some high hill, where we could study the heavens in their glory. These occasions were anticipated with delight, and we returned from them awed by the grandeur of the subjects discussed, and thrilling with a desire for further knowledge.

There were certain evenings in the week, and certain hours on Saturday, when my pupils were at liberty to call upon me, socially, or for the presentation of grievances, or requests. A small mail-box was placed in the schoolroom to receive letters which they wrote each other and me, and which was opened daily. A postmaster was selected monthly to take charge of the box, and to distribute the mail.

Our school soon became a little self-centered community in itself, not only in matters relating to education, but to amusement. We went on fishing excursions in Duxbury

Bay, sometimes returning with mackerel enough for the breakfast of the whole town. We organized sailing parties and rowing matches; we picnicked together under the "tea-party tree," in the pine woods, a well-known trysting-place for generations; and in cooler weather, enjoyed the fish and clam-chowder parties, held in some one of the many large kitchens of the town, where the good cheer could be supplemented by music and dancing.

On one holiday excursion we started off for Clark's Island, famed for bearing the name of the master's mate of the *Mayflower*, taking with us games, violins, and lunches, prepared for a day of enjoyment. Time passed so happily and fleetly, that the tide left us before we were aware that it was on the ebb. It was between two and three o'clock in the morning before the tide served for our return, and then the wind had left us, and the boys were obliged to row to the Duxbury shore. Nobody, however, seemed to regret the mishap, for all were in the halcyon days of youth, the hospitable people of the island opened their homes to those who sought shelter from the evening damps, and the boys declared "rowing was the tallest sort of fun," notwithstanding some of them showed blistered hands. And they rowed into town, and walked to their homes in the early morning, lustily singing in chorus,

"Home again! home again! from a foreign shore!"

as if they had been off a thousand leagues, and absent a year.

After a protracted and violent storm, almost cyclonic in its force and fury, some of my older boy pupils would invite me to a drive to some near, safe point, where we could see the Gurnet lighthouse, bravely upholding its twin lights amid the mighty billows that had raged around it, as if de-

termined on its destruction. And then, with a pardonable boy's pride, I would be told for the twentieth time that it was this high promontory that, A.D. 1004, Thorwald saw, the son of Eric the Red, as he was sailing from Vinland, where he had made his winter quarters.

In winter, when the ice and snow allowed it, my pupils organized coasting and skating parties, in which the girls participated as well as the boys. I was often invited to join in these excursions. It was novel and exhilarating exercise to me. Nothing less than ox-sleds sufficed for these occasions, which the boys knew how, and had the strength to manage. Starting from the summit of the hill, opposite the schoolhouse, the sleds filled with young people to their utmost capacity, they were pushed over the brow of the hill, till the inclination became steep, when they shot down to the mill-pond, and across it, with almost dangerous celerity.

In those days teachers were obliged to fall back on their own resources. There were no normal schools to train them for their work; no teachers' institutes, no educational journals, no graded schools; the text-books were poorly adapted to their uses, and but little was done with the blackboard. If a teacher had a natural aptitude for teaching, and then had been trained himself, he would in some way succeed in doing good work. He would so thoroughly master the subjects he was to teach as to supersede the text-book, and dispense with it, — would be ingenious in devising ways of quickening his pupils and holding their attention, — would keep in constant touch with them, and put much of himself into them, — and in this way, many a teacher of the olden time did better for his pupils than he ever knew. For myself, I enjoyed teaching. It was never irksome. I became attached to my pupils, was eager to do for them all I could, and, inexperienced and untrained as I was, I could always comfort myself

for any failure I made by the knowledge that I had done my very best.

Duxbury was a most interesting town fifty years ago. It was even then a famous ship-building town, although the people declared it was on the decline, and shook their heads sorrowfully, saying, "Duxbury is not what it used to be." There were, however, eight ships on the stocks in the various ship-yards, the first year I spent in the town, and others were projected for the near future. Mr. Ezra Weston, then living at "Powder Point," the present site of Mr. Knapp's famous school for boys, was the largest shipowner of the country at that time, and was extensively engaged in commerce. There were forty-three shipmasters resident in the town, a large number of whom were Atlantic ship captains, and most of them picked up their crews in town. As none of them remained a long time at home, Duxbury was emphatically a town of women and children, and the women were the most capable and intelligent that I had ever met. Thrown on their own resources almost entirely, they had become equal to any emergency, and were as handsome and well-formed as they were executive.

The launching of a ship was as sure to break up my school in Duxbury, for the time, as the arrival of the mail in "Ole Virginny." A favored few would be invited on board during the launching. Others would be asked to take seats in a boat in front of the shipyard, where they could observe the passage of the vessel into the water, and the remainder would petition to be excused from school till the great event was over. I was compelled to make a virtue of a necessity, and give a half-holiday, never sorry to witness the launching myself. The blocks were knocked away rapidly, one after another, and every obstacle in the way of the ship was removed. She was gently urged and

persuaded by the builders to begin her passage from the land to the sea. With seeming timidity she glided slowly down the ways,—grew more courageous, and proceeded faster,—and then, with one swift plunge and a shudder from stem to stern, entered her native element, amid the shouts of the on-lookers.

The names of the Duxbury people were very suggestive. Bradford, Alden, Brewster, Soule, Weston, Sprague, Winsor, Drew, Sampson,—almost all my pupils and acquaintances in town bore some one of these honored names. Of the twenty subscribers to the civil compact signed in the cabin of the *Mayflower*, November, 1620, who survived the first fatal winter, seven of them became inhabitants of Duxbury, and three of them, Elder Brewster, Miles Standish, and John Alden, made the town famous. The memory of Miles Standish is indissolubly linked with Duxbury, and "Captain's Hill," towering above his early residence four hundred yards from the sea, and eighteen hundred feet above its level, now bears a monument to his memory.

Never was there a pleasanter community in which to make one's home than Duxbury, as I knew it. The disintegration of the town had not then fairly set in, and it would be difficult to find a more hospitable, intelligent, social, and cultivated people in any New England town to-day. College presidents and professors, clergymen, librarians, business men of prominence, artists, musicians, teachers, reformers, and leaders of society have been sent out into the world since then by the town of Duxbury, and it has not surprised me to see them taking the positions to which they were ordained from birth. For I felt the brainy qualities of the people, before I had been a resident of Duxbury a month.

The women were superior housekeepers, skilled in all

delicate culinary arts, exquisite needle-women, cunning in embroidery, and adepts in household decoration, and in an accomplishment of higher value,—the art of entertaining so that their guests were entirely comfortable, happy, and at home. The men were very versatile in their general knowledge, and had at their tongues' end any information you might desire concerning the ocean and its idiosyncrasies, ships and all nautical matters, foreign countries, and human nature in general. The majority of the people lived in that part of the town called "The Village," where the houses ranged themselves along the bay, as if they and their occupants feared to lose sight of the salt water. My three and a half years of life in Duxbury were among the most enjoyable I have ever known. Changed as the town is to-day, and bereft of the people who once made life idyllic, I cannot now make a flying visit to the almost deserted locality, without a heartache for joys that are dead, and loved ones who have vanished.

The Washingtonian Total Abstinence Reform was inaugurated in Baltimore in 1840, by a club of six drinking men, who met regularly in a bar-room for a "roaring good time," all going home intoxicated, when their inebriety did not compel them to remain all night. A temperance address, to which all the club listened, led them to sign a pledge of total abstinence, and to commence a crusade against the almost universal drinking habits of the time. It spread like prairie fire,—temperance meetings were held everywhere,—temperance speakers multiplied,—temperance papers were established,—and the movement became phenomenal, and assumed tremendous proportions. Four-fifths of the drunkards of the country signed the pledge, and the reform had still a hold upon the people at the end of fifteen years of temperance work.

A BAR-ROOM AUDIENCE—THE BEGINNING OF THE GREAT TOTAL ABSTINENCE MOVEMENT.
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The town of Duxbury, like almost every town and city of New England, was brought under the spell of this mighty moral influence. A Total Abstinence Society was formed, that included most of the adult population, while a "Cold Water Army" was recruited from the children. Hon. Gershom Weston, the wealthiest and most influential man of the town at that time, was the president of the adult organization, and I was pressed into work for the children. It was the first temperance work of my life, in which I have continued to the present day. To maintain an interest among the little people, frequent meetings were necessary, which must be made attractive, with music and recitation and brief stirring speeches. Papers adapted to their comprehension were published, and books of juvenile temperance stories and songs were soon in circulation. I was placed on the editorial staff of a "Cold Water Army" paper published in Boston, and for two years shirked no duty demanded of me, although crowded with other work growing out of my profession. A compilation of the sketches I wrote for the paper was published in cheap, cloth covers, and was distributed broadcast. I sometimes meet a copy of the unpretentious booklet in some out-of-the-way locality.

On the Fourth of July the Cold Water Army came out in all its glory. The town held its celebration of the day in the pine woods, where the shade was grateful, the air fragrant and spicy, the carpet of pine needles thick under the feet, and where no one was crowded, so wide was the sweep of the amphitheatre of seats. The Army took on its largest proportions on that day, for the promise of the bountifully spread tables sure to be found in the grove on such occasions, drew the entire juvenile population into the ranks, and it marched into the woods with twice its ordinary numbers, resplendent with flags and many-colored ban-

ners, under the escort of a full-fledged band, all palpitating with expectancy.

Then what solemn re-pledging of the little ones to "total abstinence from all that intoxicates!" How vivid the contrast was made between the debauchee, with his tottering and diseased body and his enfeebled intellect, and the man who had never known the thralldom of strong drink! How the traditions of the town and the experiences of the past were marshaled before them, to emphasize the unwisdom of yielding to appetite, and the certain ruin of the inebriate! *Cui bono?* was the question I asked myself when the day was ended, and I was too wearied with its fatigues to sleep. Will any good result from these efforts, and can these children be fortified against the temptations that are sure to meet them?

It did not prove fruitless work. Living to-day in my neighborhood are five men, now verging upon old age, who were boys in that Cold Water Army. Two were sons of intemperate fathers, two were the sons of widows, and one was motherless. The environments of all were unfavorable, and no restraining influence was thrown around them, save what came from that temperance organization of children. To the impressions there received, they attribute their escape from the seductions that enticed them in their early manhood. "We should have fallen by the way, as did other boys in our neighborhood, had we not been held by the Cold Water Army, during the unformed days of our young manhood," is their uniform testimony. No good work is ever lost, and the heavenly seed that is sown will not betray our trust, but will, somewhere, sometime, burgeon and blossom, and ripen to fruitage.

It was in Duxbury that I first met Theodore Parker. He had just delivered his famous sermon on "The Tran-

sient and Permanent in Christianity," which brought him into great disrepute with the entire Unitarian body; while the Orthodox world was stirred to condemnation of him from one end of the country to the other. Among my acquaintances he was denounced unsparingly; was regarded as an atheist, a dishonest man, a menace to Christianity and civilization, a man of bad manners and worse morals; and it was even thought by some of his severe critics that the law should be invoked to silence him, for the sake of the rising generation. Great was my surprise when I met this quiet, unpretentious man, gentle in speech as in manner, fond of little children, who were always attracted to him, immaculate in life and character, reverent and devout, not only when he spoke of the essentials of Christianity, but also when considering the views which he regarded erroneous, and labored to correct.

I had not intended to listen to Mr. Parker's addresses, but his gentleness and fairness swept away my prejudices, and I ventured to enroll myself as one of the audience that gathered in the parlors of Hon. Gershom Weston, to listen to his series of "Discourses on Matters Pertaining to Religion." From the standpoint of that day they were radical, and yet so reverent was the spirit of the great iconoclast, and so firmly did he hold to the great essentials of the Christian religion, as he regarded them, that no one was shocked. Undoubtedly much of the odium heaped upon his name grew out of his unflinching opposition to slavery, and his scathing criticism of our proslavery public men; for it was a cunning trick of the dastardly politics of that time, when from 1840 to 1860, the whole country, with most of its so-called great men, bowed down before the slaveocracy of the nation, and did its wicked bidding, to assail the characters of those who opposed the "peculiar institution."

While Mr. Parker was reading his lecture one evening, a large maltese cat belonging to the house strayed into the parlor, and making himself entirely at home, walked around among the guests, looking up into their faces, and sniffing at their garments. Having completed his investigation he sat down in front of Mr. Parker for a few moments, winked and blinked at him in a confidential manner, and then with a gentle "mew," as if to say, "By your leave, Sir!" jumped on Mr. Parker's knee, and began to settle himself for a nap. The hostess immediately came to his relief, removed the cat, and shut him out of the room.

In five minutes he was back again by some other door of entrance, and without any circumlocution or preliminaries, jumped again to Mr. Parker's knee, and with a sort of doggedness, hurried to settle himself as quickly as possible. Again the cat was removed, and this time was put out of the house. As luck would have it, a belated attendant on the lectures arrived a few minutes after, and when he entered the house, the cat darted in ahead of him, and before the guest was seated, the cat was again firmly planted on Mr. Parker's knee. All laughed heartily at Tommy's pertinacity, and Mr. Parker halted in his lecture. "Cats are generally fond of me," said the lecturer, "but this fellow is evidently in love with me, and wishes to hear my lecture. Don't remove him! I'll take care of him!" And drawing his silk handkerchief from his pocket, he placed it underneath the cat, drew him closer, stroked him into a quiet assurance, and then continued his discourse, while the cat loudly purred his satisfaction.

Marshfield adjoins Duxbury, where Daniel Webster made his summer home. When the sessions of Congress were over, Mr. Webster always hastened to his "farm by the sea," where among his "honest oxen," as he called

them, and the plain people of the town, he sought rest and recuperation. He was very accessible to the people of Duxbury, who probably saw more of him than did his own townspeople. His visits to the Duxbury bank, with which he transacted business, were quite frequent. Everybody in town knew his horse and buggy, and when they were observed waiting at the door of the bank, there would soon congregate a little company of boys and girls, eager for the courteous bow, or the kind word of greeting, which they were sure to receive when Mr. Webster made his exit, when every lad would lift his cap, and every girl drop a courtesy. Mr. Webster was a most persistent and enthusiastic fisherman, and his boat was as well known to Duxbury people as his buggy. If they encountered his boat when they were out rowing, sailing, or fishing, no matter how objectionable his politics or habits might be to any of the company, they could not be persuaded to pass him without giving him a friendly greeting, and receiving his kind recognition in return.

It was the custom of the young people of Duxbury to drive over to Marshfield to welcome Mr. Webster, when he came down to his farm for the summer. They were careful not to bore him by too long a stay, never to allow refreshments to be served, and when they went in large numbers, they would propose a reception by the great man on the broad piazzas, and not intrude into the not over-spacious parlors. I remember making one of a party of fifty or more, that drove over to Mr. Webster's home one warm afternoon in the latter part of July, when his home-coming was rather late, and had been delayed by political emergencies. We arranged ourselves in a semicircle about the piazza, on the shady side of the house, and when our spokesman had delivered his brief address of welcome, which was

overflowing with the affectionate homage he inspired in young people who came in touch with him, Mr. Webster replied in a voice that was choked with emotion.

He had just experienced a political defeat, and it had greatly depressed him. He did not attempt to conceal his disappointment, and congratulated us on our youth, when we had not learned how rare a thing is true friendship, how unsubstantial is human trust, and how unsatisfying all human life, and public life in particular. He conducted us through his beautiful rose-garden, pointed out to us his fine cattle with pride, and explained some of the agricultural experiments his farmer had undertaken. All the while his manner was so kind and fatherly, and he condescended so charmingly to the humblest and most timid of our company, that we forgot the high distinction he had attained and were untroubled by any oppressive sense of his greatness.

Mr. Webster had one very dear friend in Duxbury — a Mr. C. H. Thomas — whose house he frequented, and where he was always a welcome guest. I was invited, one happy afternoon, to meet the renowned statesman at this gentleman's home. Other guests were present, but I do not recall them. I remember Mr. Webster's simplicity, his seeming forgetfulness of himself, and his utter lack of egotism. He addressed his conversation more to the men of the company than to the women. At tea, some remark brought out the fact that I was a teacher, when, sitting next me, he made some inquiries concerning my school, and then asked, "Do you enjoy teaching?" I replied in the affirmative, and spoke with enthusiasm, I fancy, of the profession, adding that "I got more pleasure out of it than from any other source."

"Ah, me!" said he, with a sigh, "I believe I was happier as a teacher, way back in the old days, than I am in the life I live to-day."

Mr. Thomas's young brother, Ray Thomas, had been Mr. Webster's private secretary, and had died in Washington in his service, early in the year 1840. Mr. Webster was very much attached to the young man, who was highly gifted and much beloved. He sought to comfort the bereaved mother and his brother and sisters in their affliction, and wrote them several consolatory letters, one of which Mr. Thomas gave me, and which I here append. It reveals Mr. Webster as other than the ambitious public man and the scheming politician. The letter is dated Washington, D. C., March 24, 1840.

"To-day, dear friend, you will reach home, and will soon perform the last solemn rites, and leave your beloved brother to sleep with kindred dust. You will then have done, my good friend, all that love and friendship can do; and must reconcile yourself without murmuring to the will of God. His providence is mysterious, but what we know not now we shall know hereafter. Everything is well, because everything is in His hands, without whose notice not a sparrow falls to the ground. I am aware that your mother and sisters will be profoundly penetrated with grief; they will shed many tears; but pray them to be comforted, and enjoy gratefully the recollections connected with the beloved brother, now that they can see his face no more.

"I have lost children dear to me as drops of my own heart's blood. I have lost other relatives and friends, sometimes cut down by most sudden and awful strokes; and I have suffered most keenly from these bereavements. Yet I thank God that those children and those friends have lived. The pain occasioned by their loss is more than compensated by the pleasure of being conscious that they have lived, and that they *do* live, and that the death of the body cannot annihilate their spiritual existence. There is gratification, though a melancholy one, in the recollection connected with a beloved object, even when deceased. The past is a treasure well-secured, and safe against all occurrences.

"And now, dear Henry, and all the members of the family, since love and affection can do no more, leave your son and brother in the hands of God. Be thankful that he has lived on earth so long, and weep not as those without hope. His death, which has happened so early, must have happened some time, and of the proper time God is the only judge. And may His blessing be with you and with us all!

"Yours sincerely,
"DANIEL WEBSTER."

CHAPTER XXIII.

FATE—AN EVENTFUL CHRISTMAS NIGHT—A REMARKABLE
SERMON—MY FIRST MEETING WITH MR. LIVERMORE—
OUR MARRIAGE—WHAT HAPPENED.

An Old-Fashioned Singing Master—Opposition to a "bellowing Organ"—"When an Organ comes into this Singing Loft, my Violin and I go out!"—A long Tramp in the Moonlight on Christmas Night—Standing beside the Church Door—Shall I enter?—The Door suddenly opens—A Triumphant Burst of Song—I drop into a vacant Seat—A remarkable Sermon—"He shall save his People from their Sins"—A Great Peace steals over me—Introducing myself to the Clergyman—He supplies me with Books and Periodicals—My Teacher becomes my Husband—The Storm bursts upon me—Friends forsake me—My Father Inconsolable—A complete Surrender.

THERE were three churches in Duxbury at that time, the Unitarian, Universalist, and Methodist. The Unitarian congregation was the largest, the wealthiest, and the most cultivated, and stood highest in the social scale. I attended the Methodist church with my old friends, Mr. and Mrs. Symmes of the Duxbury Bank. But frequently I walked across the "Major's pasture" to the Unitarian church, where I was always sure of hearing a finely written, practical discourse, which usually occupied an hour in delivery.

I was also sure of hearing one of the finest choirs of the country, taught, trained, and led by John Wilde of Braintree, one of the famous "singing-masters" of the day, whose severe drill was evident in the "precision and decision" with which his choirs sang. There was no organ in the singing-gallery, nor was there a probability of one in

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John Wilde's day. For he was as proud of his fine violin, his exquisite playing, and his ringing tenor voice, as he was of his choirs. "When an organ comes into this singing-loft, bellowing like a bull of Bashan, my violin and I will go out!" was his emphatic declaration.

Gradually, many of the more liberal churches had abated their rigorous hostility to Christmas as a church festival, and were accustomed to utilize it regularly, in any manner that made it helpful to their parishes. The Duxbury churches were among the first to forget their prejudices against the day, if they ever had any, and to place it on the church calendar as a day of gladness and cheerful observance. One gave up the holiday to the Sunday-school children, for whom a Christmas tree was hung with promiscuous gifts, which were harvested after an hour of semi-religious exercises, which the little people greatly enjoyed, as the programme was chiefly musical. Another utilized it for the adults of the church, who sat down to a supper, and indulged afterwards in speeches and songs,—a mild prototype of the pretentious banquet of to-day.

The Universalists made a larger use of Christmas than any of the three parishes. On Christmas eve their children were treated to a small feast and a bountiful supply of presents. They played games and frolicked as happy children will. On Christmas night a joyful religious service was held in the church, which was decorated and illuminated most brilliantly, special musical services were arranged, and the sermon was devoted to some topic connected with the day, and the event it was supposed to commemorate,—the coming of Christ. I had never attended a Christmas service, although I had been urgently invited to participate in the pleasant exercises. I had been so reared that it was not easy for me to become interested

in Christmas. It signified nothing to me. So a third time I declined attendance on the Christmas festivities, assigning the true reason, that I needed the time for work.

It was a bright winter day, full of sunshine and beauty. The ground was bare of snow, there had been none of the usual severe weather, and the grass was vividly green in moist places. But beautiful as was the day, I was ill at ease. An intense dissatisfaction with life, and all that it promised, had taken possession of me, and neither by hard work, reading, or philosophizing could I throw it off. What was the meaning of life? Who could solve the great problem of human destiny? Forced into existence without our consent being asked or given, our position arbitrarily assigned us in advance of our coming, compelled to learn the conditions and laws of life by the hardest experiences, through the pain and suffering consequent on our violation of them, we stumble on blindly and ignorantly for a few troubled and reluctant years, and then drop out,—where?

As the evening deepened, and my spirits drooped more heavily, I ceased work, and went out for a long tramp. I passed the Unitarian and Methodist churches, lighted and filled with people, whom I felt no inclination to join. I reached the "village," and neared the Universalist church, which commanded a fine view of the sea, then at flood-tide. The full moon was riding through the heavens, and shone across the wide expanse of water in a broad path of silver light. I stopped to gaze. The cool air blew lightly on my heated face, with grateful refreshing, and I stood quiet and alone, absorbed in moody contemplation, and yet longing for light and peace. The church door, a little way behind me, opened for the admission of visitors, when a triumphant burst of song rang out on the night air: "Glory to God in the highest! on earth peace and good will to men!"

Again and again was the glad song repeated, in higher and more triumphant measures, as if the singers were unable to repress their joy. I listened till the anthem was ended, and then walked across the lawn and stood beside the church door, irresolute. Should I enter? Another group



A CRISIS IN MY LIFE.

I stood beside the church door, irresolute. Should I enter?

of people entered, and the sexton, seeing me, held the door open for my entrance. I dropped into an unoccupied seat near the vestibule, the only vacancy seemingly in that throng of people.

The singing was followed by a fervent, hopeful prayer, from my standpoint unusual in its matter, and unfamiliar in its phraseology. Another burst of Christmas music followed, and then came the sermon. The preacher was a

young man, not more than twenty-five years old, blonde in complexion, with a good voice and a simple, earnest, prepossessing manner. He announced his text, "And thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins."

"Save His people from their *sins*!" I ejaculated mentally; "he has not read that correctly." Taking a New Testament from the book-rack in the pew, I turned to the first chapter of Matthew, twenty-first verse, and read for myself. He had read the verse aright, but it had an unfamiliar look to me, as if I had never before seen it. It was a statement that had never arrested my attention, or made upon me any impression, and there flashed through me the possibility of another gospel than what I had learned.

"It was not from endless punishment, that Christ came to save us," said the young preacher, "but from our sins, from ourselves. He came to teach us how to live, that we might avoid the mistakes and wrong-doings to which we are liable. The all-wise Father caused the world to exist, because He desired it. To intimate that He did not will it, is to suggest the existence of a power higher than God, which compelled its existence, and that would be to orphan the world. He must have called us into being because of love, for any other motive would be unworthy of God, the Good. Our relationship to Him then must be that of a child to its mother and father, and as He is infinite in His power, 'neither death nor life, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other agency, shall be able to separate us from the love of God.'"

These views he expounded and enforced by a wealth of quotations from the New Testament, and illustrations from life. "Had not Jesus, who came to reveal the Father, and who was called the 'brightness of God's glory,'—had he

not commanded us to love our enemies, to bless them that curse us, to do good to them that hate us, and to pray for those who spitefully use us? And for what reason? Because it would uplift us Godward, till we should be worthy of our Father in Heaven, who sends His rain alike on the just and the unjust, and causes His sun to shine on the evil and the good. Did not Jesus instruct us to pardon those who sin against us, not merely seven times, but seventy times seven, or as long as an offense was committed against us? Would God command us, His weak, erring, ignorant children of a day, to be better than Himself? Would He command us to love and forgive forever and forever, as long as there is anything or anybody to be loved and forgiven, and then because of our offenses against Him cast us into outer darkness, to be punished as long as God lives? No!" said the preacher, "a thousand times no! That would make the great Father, with His infinite heart of love, more wretched even than His helpless children, cast out to wander in the void."

He narrated the story of the prodigal son, who spent his living riotously and in debauch, until he was without means to appease his hunger. Then, he "came to himself," and remembering that in his father's house there was abundance, he returned home to confess his unworthiness, and to ask for a servant's place in his father's household. But when he was a great way off, his father saw him coming, and had compassion on him, and ran to meet him, forgiving him before he had asked forgiveness, and welcoming him before he had even made an apology. So great was his joy over this son who had been dead, but was now alive, who had been lost, but now was found, that it awoke the displeasure of the older son, who had never wasted his father's subsistence, and had always lived an orderly and reputable life.

Then he used the illustration of the lost sheep. A shepherd in the mountains with a hundred sheep found that one was missing, when he gathered them in the fold for the night. So enclosing the ninety-and-nine whom it was safe to leave, and who were trustworthy, he went out into the darkness to search for the sheep that was lost. He sought it not a day, nor a week, nor a month, nor a year — but *till he found the lost sheep*. Then carrying it back on his shoulders, he called his friends and neighbors together, and rejoiced with them more over the sheep that was lost and found again, than over the ninety-and-nine which had not gone astray. "What inference can be drawn from such illustrations?" asked the preacher, "but that the boundless love of God surrounds us, and that we are safe in His care, as is the child in that of the mother? If we disobey the laws of God, whether they be moral or physical, we must suffer the penalty of violated law, and no other being can suffer it for us. God has made the path of transgression hard, expressly to drive us into the path of obedience. But through all our sinning and stumbling, and the severe discipline consequent thereon, God will always remain our Father, forgiving us in advance of our asking forgiveness, seeking us with His unfailing love, as did the shepherd his lost sheep, until He finds us."

I had read these quotations and illustrations hundreds of times, and was as familiar with them as with the multiplication table. But I had never used my reason to draw from them the conclusions that legitimately followed, and to which I now listened. A great peace stole over me. A pulsation of love for all the world throbbed through my being. As I glanced over the listening congregation I wished I might shake hands with every person present. How could any one logically escape from the conclusions of this young man,

if one believed the Bible? If he should preach that sermon to an audience composed of people like my father, would they not assent to his comforting teachings? I had my doubts, — but how could they reject them? I would not be rash, nor in haste, but would examine for myself, and obtain from this young preacher the proof of his convictions, and learn by what steps he had entered into this largeness of religious life.

The audience were rapidly filing out into the moonlighted night, and the young minister approached the vestibule near where I stood, waiting. I introduced myself to him, and found that he already knew me by sight and by name, although we had not met before. I had been teaching in the town two years. I frankly avowed my interest in the sermon he had delivered, told him



FATE. — MY FIRST MEETING WITH MR. LIVERMORE.

how entirely new it was to me, that I had never heard nor read anything like it before, and that I wished to know more of the views he had advanced. "Would he kindly loan me his sermon for re-reading, which I would return to him in twenty-four hours?" Without hesitation, he placed it in my hand. I wanted more than this, and as a large number of people still lingered in the church, I pushed my inquiries.

"Are there many people, sir, who accept the views you have advanced to-night?"

"Yes, a large number, and they are rapidly increasing."

"Do you belong to a denomination?"

"Oh, certainly! You must have heard of the Universalist denomination. This is a Universalist church, and I am an ordained minister of the Universalist denomination."

Yes, I *had* heard of the Universalist denomination, but unfavorably always, as if it were outside the pale of Christian organizations. But I had not thought of this particular church, with its minister and congregation, as constituting an integral part of that body. I continued my questionings.

"Then your denomination must have literature,— books, papers, tracts, magazines?"

"We have."

"Where are your headquarters? I wish to investigate these doctrines, and to pursue a course of reading that will be educational."

"I have a small library of standard theological works, and the best and latest magazines and papers on these subjects. They are at your service. I live at 'The Point,' only two doors below you, and you have a calling acquaintance with the family with whom I board."

I accepted the offer, and made an appointment to meet him at his library, the next day, on my return from school. As I was unable to make a selection, I accepted the works recommended by my new friend, and was soon deep in a course of theological reading and study. I was not interested in all the books he loaned me. Those which were devoted to the exegesis of Scripture texts, then in dispute between the orthodox and liberal sects, I discarded altogether. It seemed too monstrous, too impossible a

thing, that the Deity should make known his will and purposes to the human race, in a revelation so ambiguous, that one body of Christians should construe its meaning to be just the reverse of what was accepted by another body,— both being equally intelligent, learned, and desirous to know the truth. And that, too, when eternal life or death hinged on correctness of belief, as I had been taught to believe.

But there were other books in the young minister's library that were of priceless value to me, and I read and re-read them, and made extracts from them, until they became a part of my mental furnishing, never to be dispensed with. One, I copied entire into my scrap-book, without inquiring if it was for sale at the book stores. It was so entirely beyond the common thought that it did not seem like an article of merchandise. Williamson's "Moral Argument in favor of God's unlimited Love," and Dr. Channing's "Moral Argument against Calvinism," were among the books most helpful to me,— the latter leading me to the ownership of Dr. Channing's works, which opened to me a new world. His essay on Calvinism cleared the moral atmosphere for me, forever, and corrected the unworthy views of God which I held, and which that system ascribes to Him.

The next school vacation I passed at home. I called on the beloved minister who had stood by me in all my trials, even when he failed to comprehend them, and without any reservation, told him of the larger hope and broader faith into which I was inducted, and of the rest, peace, and quiet happiness which had come to me. My opinions concerning the doctrine of punishment were changed. I had no doubt but punishment and wrong-doing are inseparably connected; for this is one of God's unchanging laws. But I had ceased

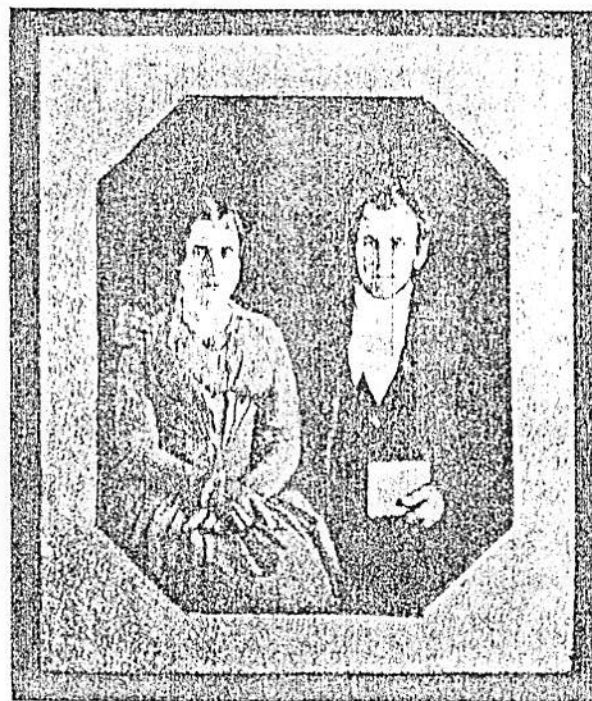
to believe in *endless* punishment, which had been the horror of my life, had darkened my childhood, and made me old before my time.

Dr. Neale did not disagree with me, nor in any way condemn or criticise my utterances, nor did he object to my course of reading. Once he interrupted me to say that "no one who does his own reading and thinking can avoid changes of belief." And when I was speaking of the dogma of endless punishment, he remarked, "The Christian church will yet be compelled to reconsider and reconstruct this whole question of punishment. For the community is advancing in intelligence and charity, the spirit of the gospel is progressing, and it will not always carry along with it the unchristian phases of the theology of the sixteenth century."

He catechised me more closely than was necessary concerning the Universalist minister who had guided my reading and study, and laughingly advised against cultivating any farther acquaintance with him. "For," said he, "I foresee a greater trouble in store for you than your change of creed will bring. You will be marrying this young clergyman one of these days. And then you will bring down upon yourself the ostracism of your friends and acquaintances, the condemnation of the church, and will break the hearts of your father and mother, for the Universalists have not yet found their way to popular favor." No such result seemed likely to follow, at that time, and I assured Dr. Neale there was no cause for anxiety.

Nevertheless, in less than a year, and just as the Partridge Academy was ready to receive its first class of students, I transferred my pupils to its care, and became the wife of Rev. Daniel Parker Livermore, who had been my teacher and guide in matters of religion. The very events followed, which Dr. Neale had predicted. I was surprised

at the fury of the storm that burst upon me. No similar manifestation of sectarian prejudice would be possible now, for all sects have gained in religious toleration, during the last fifty years. Friends forsook me, acquaintances ostracized me, I was disapproved by the church, and for a time



MR. AND MRS. LIVERMORE.

A reproduction of an old daguerreotype taken the day after their wedding, May 7, 1845.

my father was inconsolable. My mother alone congratulated me upon my marriage with a man, in whose favor she decided on her first interview with him. Dr. Neale was absent in Europe, and I greatly missed the influence he would have exerted in my favor. As my critics were clearly in the wrong, and I realized hourly that the great blessedness into which I had entered more than compensated for

the disfavor into which I had fallen, I could afford to bide my time, and wait for a return of better days.

They came, when Dr. Neale returned from abroad. Through him I sent to the church a statement of my change of belief, and while regretting the fact that our paths must henceforth diverge, I thanked them for all their past love and patience, of which I besought a continuance. The whole matter was placed in the hands of Dr. Neale, to whom life and character were more than dogma, and whose influence was always in favor of peace and harmony,—and it was long years before my name was dropped from the church record—if indeed it ever has been. Through all the changes that came afterward, my friendship with Dr. Neale continued unabated up to the day of his death. He always spoke of me, and presented me, as his “parishioner and friend,” and from the very first included my husband in his fraternal regards. At his request, I attended the services of the First Baptist Church on Communion Sundays whenever it was possible, as long as he remained its pastor, and gradually my old friends forgot their disapproval of my marriage, especially after they had made the acquaintance of Mr. Livermore, and found that he was a mild-mannered and refined gentleman.

It took longer for my father to conquer his unhappiness concerning his heterodox son-in-law. But courtesy, kindness, and manliness are winning qualities, and one cannot withstand them forever. In the long run they are omnipotent. In Mrs. Humphrey Ward's first novel, — “Robert Elsmere,” — Catharine, the wife of the hero, and who is the real heroine of the story, abandons herself for weeks to immitigable sorrow over her husband's departure from the rigid faith in which he was reared, and which he had been ordained to preach. But at last, light breaks in upon her, and she

enters her husband's presence one morning, a transformed woman, and thus addresses him:

“Robert, I have thought that God speaks to all people in one voice. But He has shown me that I am mistaken, and that He speaks to different people in many different voices!”

So the time came, at last, when my father's mental vision was illumined, and seeking my husband in his study, he said:

“I have been in the habit of thinking that there is but one way of approach to God the Father, and that all people must find it, or fail of being received by Him. But I have been enlightened, and know now that there are diverse ways of seeking after God, and that those alone will find Him who seek Him in earnest. I cannot deny that you have found Him, for your daily life is the proof.”

It was a complete surrender. From that day they were the dearest friends, the most sympathetic father and son, the most congenial companions, and each became the best helper of the other.